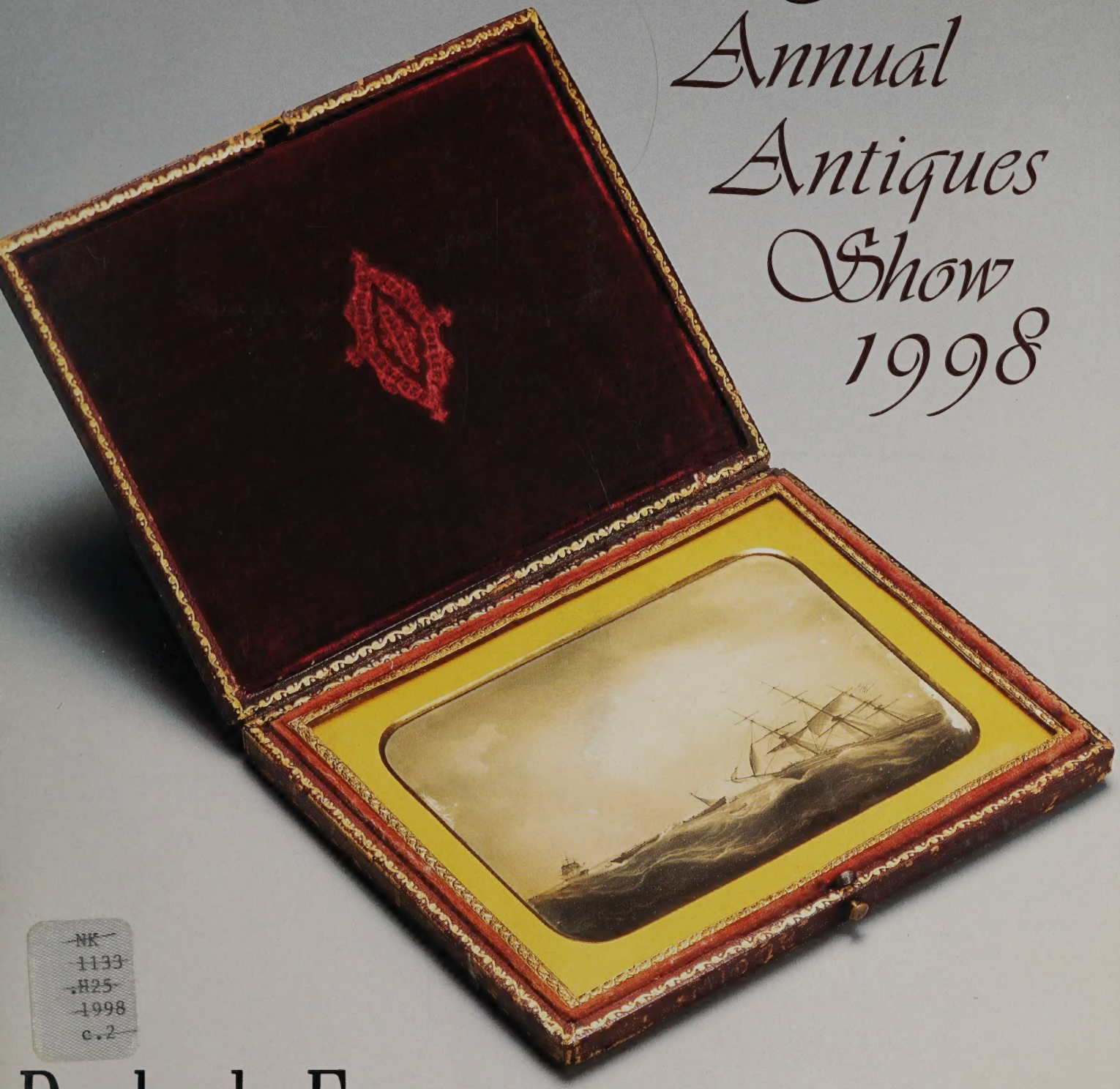
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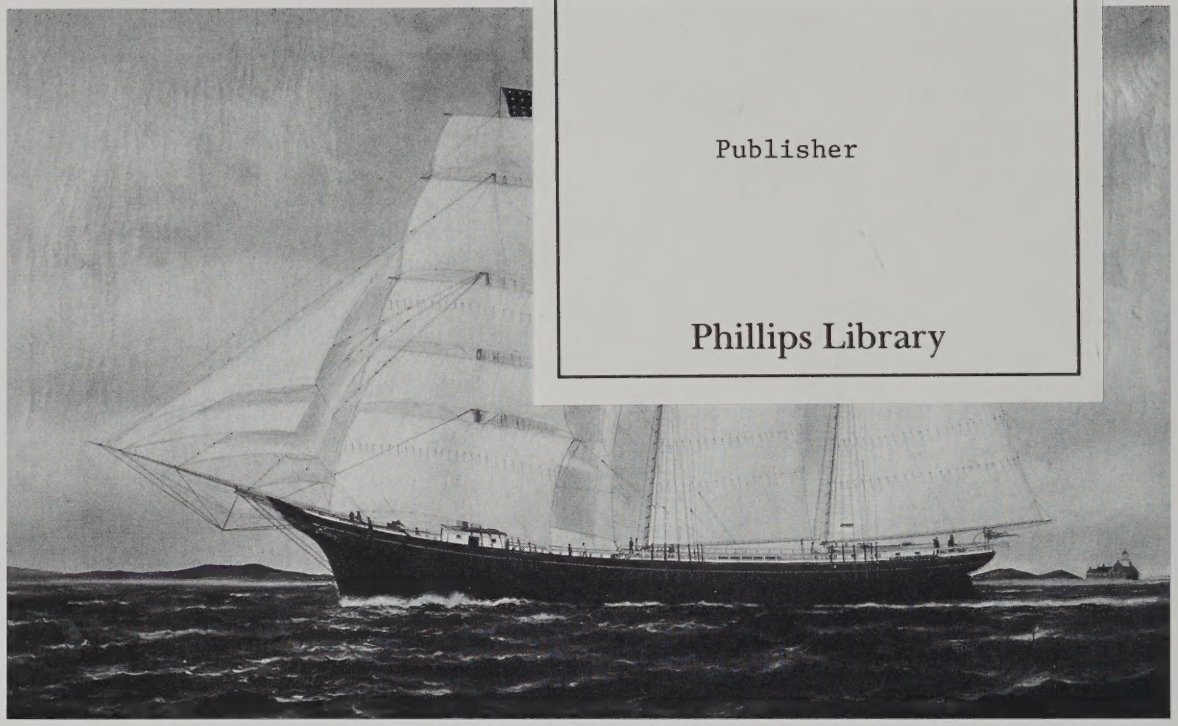
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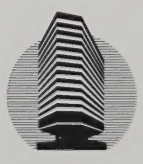
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# Foreword

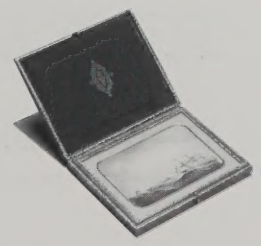
Welcome to the Peabody Essex Museum 26th Annual Antiques Show! It is remarkable to have passed last year's milestone silver anniversary and be moving forward into the future with this long-standing event. Our popular Annual Antiques Show stands as a tribute to members, friends and supporters who have helped make this event possible for 26 years.

On behalf of the Trustees and staff, I want to thank the innumerable volunteers who make this weekend so successful. In particular our thanks go to Jenifer McDougall, Chair of the event, and Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Creighton Jr., Honorary Chairs.

Thank you for your support of the 26th Annual Antiques Show. Enjoy the show!

Dan L. Monroe
Executive Director

*Cover:* Half-plate daguerreotype by the Mathew Brady studio of an oil painting by James E. Buttersworth. The painting depicts the ships *Antarctic* and *Three Bells* rescuing passengers and crew from the wrecked steamer *San Francisco* on December 24, 1853.
*Photo:* *Peabody Essex Museum, Jeffrey Dykes*



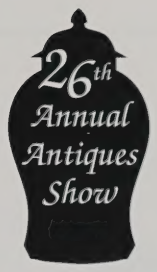


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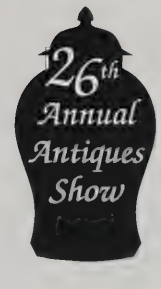
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# *Honorary Chairpersons*

## *Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Creighton Jr.*

*The Peabody Essex Museum Annual Antiques Show Committee is delighted that Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Creighton Jr. are honorary chairs of this year's show.*



Al and Hilary Creighton have been great supporters of the Annual Antiques Show for many years, as well as dedicated volunteers for Peabody Essex Museum. Mr. Creighton was appointed an advisory trustee of the museum in 1982 and became a trustee in 1986. He served on the Building, Natural History, and Development Committees before being named an Honorary Trustee in 1993. Mrs. Creighton was on the original Membership Council, as well as a founding member of the East India Marine Associates Committee, of which she is still a member

Mr. and Mrs. Creighton are particularly interested in the museum's Maritime and Natural History collections. Land conservation is a strong interest of both — Mr. Creighton recently retired as President of the Trustees of Reservations and serves on the boards of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Essex County Greenbelt Association. Mrs. Creighton is an Associate Member of the Ladies Committee of the Museum of Fine Arts and a member of the Arnold Arboretum Council. The Creightons live in Manchester with their black Labrador Retriever, Lily.

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## *Acknowledgments*

On behalf of the Committee, as we celebrate our 26th year, I wish to acknowledge, with special gratitude, the many diverse efforts of those people involved in the production of this year's event:

- Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Creighton, Jr., Honorary Chairs, for their enthusiastic support.
- The Board of Trustees and Overseers for their commitment to this committee and annual event.
- Our Corporate Sponsors for their very generous support. Especially Northeast Auctions by Ronald Bourgeault for sponsorship of the Preview Party, and Skinner Auctioneers and Appraisers for sponsorship of Saturday evening's reception and lecture.
- All of our individual sponsors, benefactors, patrons and friends for their generous contributions.
- Stephen Fletcher, Executive Vice President of Skinner and Dr. Daniel R. Finamore, Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History, for their interesting and informative articles.
- Colleene Fesko, Vice President of Anerican and European Paintings at Skinner, for her entertaining talk "Wish You Were There: 19th Century Views of Boston's North Shore."
- The dealers, without whom the show wouldn't take place.
- The catalog advertisers for their ongoing interest in the show.
- Celebrations Catering, Elizabeth Creed & Company, and the Hawthorne Hotel for their contributions to the Preview Party.
- Missy Kasnet and Merrilyn Belliveau for their *beautiful* floral arrangements
- All the staff who gave both time and energy to the Show, including Admissions, Maintenance and Security, and Membership and Development. Particular thanks to Irene Curran for her tireless efforts, Susan Cathcart for all her input, and Sally Tompkins for her good work.
- All the volunteers who performed a myriad of duties including passing hors d'oeuvres and greeting guests .
- Capital Offset of Concord, NH for their expert production of the catalog.
- Chris Vining, Show Manager for 26 years!
- And, in great appreciation, to the committee, a team of talented and professional individuals who have generously volunteered behind the scenes to insure the success of the event.
- And lastly, I am most grateful to Anne Emmons Barton, whose hard work and good humor make for not only a successful event, but a fun one as well.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenifer L. McDougall

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26th Annual Antiques Show

# Photographic Encounters with the Sea

*Daniel Finamore*
*Russell W. Knight Curator of Maritime Art and History*

Whether on a voyage of discovery or commerce, a military campaign or recreational cruise, time spent on or near the sea invariably inspires a desire to express to others the physical and emotional impact of the experience. The diversity of human encounters with the sea has elicited an equally broad spectrum of literary and visual art forms to convey the significance of those experiences to others. Great maritime photographs have been created in the pursuit of many goals, whether for fine art, on commission to an industrial artisan, or by an amateur with the urge to document a personal experience.

Unlike the practice of photography today, which is pursued with equal ease in the varied environments of the sailing regatta and the graduation tent, most photography in the nineteenth century took place indoors. With constantly changing variables of sunlight, clouds, wind and currents, the marine environment presented infinite challenges for the photographer. In photography's earliest years, the long exposure times of equipment, the uncontrollable variables of sunlight and reflection, and the movement of both clouds and water were enough to chase all but the most intrepid photographers back into their studios. Few artists dared tackle the difficult subject of a vessel afloat, and those who did were limited to ships that were either anchored, moored or wrecked — with milky blurs of water moving around them. An example of such a rare image is the daguerreotype of a steam frigate, taken by an unidentified artist, circa 1860. The ship appears to be on the open ocean, but at a considerable distance, so the effect of any motion is not a blurred image. In fact, with no steam



Quarter-plate daguerreotype of an American steam frigate, circa 1860. The photographer is unidentified, but the daguerreotype plate was manufactured in Connecticut.

coming from the stack and few sails visible, the frigate is likely stationary. A photographer in this era interested in capturing any more nautical action was required to work from already existing stationary images, such as that on the cover.

By the 1880s, lighter grade equipment with briefer exposure times had been developed, allowing dedicated photographers to get close to their subjects when they were at their most dramatic, moving rapidly through the water. With a fast boat of his own, of course, a photographer can race around the subject to frame it properly, to get side lighting that will define the shape of a hull and sails, or to backlight it so that the sun creates sparkles on the water. With these reduced limitations, photographers were free to create images that more closely represented the maritime experience they observed. Images such as the portrait of the yacht *Elmina* by Willard Jackson (1871-1940) display the confluence of specialized knowledge on the part of the photographer, both of yachts under sail and of the photographic art.

Though not necessarily the one most likely to have a camera on hand, the mariner is the one most frequently best positioned to capture a dramatic photograph at sea. In the trying circumstances of severe weather, when seconds can mean the difference between safety and peril, mariners have occasionally shown the presence of mind to take the unusual photograph that conveys the immediacy of the experience. For example, while rounding Cape Horn during a southern Winter gale in the early 1920s, the chief steward of the White Star Liner *Ionic* secured a picture of the bark *Garthsnaid* as the vessel was passing under



Schooner-yacht *Elmina* off Marblehead, 1905-10, photograph by Willard B. Jackson.

the stern of the *Ionic* while running before the severe winds. Four crewmen are taking in the sail from the main foremast yard, suspended beneath a fully-reefed fore-top-sail. At the moment of exposure, the yaw of the ship has left them suspended above nothing but the foaming sea.



The bark *Garthsnaid* rounding Cape Horn during the southern winter, 1924. The photograph was taken by H. Ibbetson, chief steward of the S.S. *Ionic*.

During the third quarter of the nineteenth century, photography was dispersed to every major port city across the globe, much of it in the form of commercial work. Any harbor active with sailing ships, steamers or yachts seemed to support at least one professional who recorded their profiles as they entered or departed, and some major ports supported several in competition. Just as art historians have, until recently, ignored the contributions of photography to fine art, academic historians have ignored the information available in photo archives. Photographs were utilized solely for the objective information they contained, as illustrations of points to be made in text. Yet a photograph such as that of a dismasted schooner in high seas conveys information on a purely visual basis, and does it far more cogently than a competent writer could accomplish without distracting the reader with historical specifics.

Nothing is known of the incident, the schooner, the mariners, or their ultimate fate beyond what is seen in this photograph. Nonetheless, this image stands as a testament to a seagoing photographer's motivation to record the most dire of circumstances. The image presents the crew of a schooner in the midst of an extremely perilous situation. The crew looks anxiously out at the approaching wave, while their broken masts and tangle of destroyed rigging and gear on deck suggest that their predicament might get more difficult yet. Although nothing is known of the historical specifics of the incident, such as the name of the boat or of the mariners, the image succinctly conveys the emotions one must experience at being dismasted in high seas. In fact, the lack of documentation concerning the specifics of the scene only enhances the viewer's ability to imagine what it would be like as a participant in such a situation, where and whenever this one took place.

The battered condition of this photograph, replete with scratches, abrasion and splattered paint, is evidence of its life history as a three-dimensional artifact. Although most commonly analyzed for the visual message created by a photographer to be observed by a viewer, individual photographs are actually objects that have histories of their own. Sometimes a battered old photo betrays its history of having been carried in a wallet or exhibited in a sunny room for too long. Most of these histories cannot be reconstructed, but the evidence of their treatment is intriguing nonetheless. Perhaps the battered condition of the schooner image is evidence that it served a long life as a remembrance for a survivor of the experience.



Dismasted schooner in high seas, circa 1930, by an unidentified photographer.

The origins and early history of the museum's maritime photography collections are closely linked to cosmopolitan trends in mid-nineteenth-century America, which affected intellectual life on many levels. One of the earliest daguerreotypes in the museum collection is of the facade of East India Marine Hall captured in a whole-plate daguerreotype. The photographer is unidentified, but marks on the plate suggest that the image was produced in 1840, only one year after the invention of photography. The daguerreotype has been in the museum collection for many years, but unfortunately, poor condition prevents it from appearing in the exhibition.

Photographic prints and negatives began entering the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum shortly after the medium was invented in 1839. These photographs joined the extensive collection of painted portraits that were acquired as documents recording the visages of prominent Essex County figures, sea captains, statesmen and their families. It was most likely a photographic portrait of society member Matthew Maury that was turned toward the wall in East India Marine Hall during the Civil War, in protest to his southern leanings.

Beginning in the 1920s, the Marine Research Society of Salem, an organization devoted to preserving and disseminating information about early merchant sail, developed a vast collection of photographs of ships. The collection eventually joined the museum's growing archive of images that were organized according to vessel name, rig type, industry and shipping line. This corpus of photographs was expanded with donations and purchases of collections of two sorts: those representing the work of a single artist, such as over 3,000 prints and glass negatives of yachting scenes taken by Willard Jackson; and those compiled by collectors focused on a single subject, such as the more than 100,000 images of steam-powered vessels collected by Mr. Alan Deitsch.

The self-conscious fusion of maritime subject matter with fine art aesthetics constitutes an area with strong potential for future collecting. Whether utilized as contributions to art, history, or visual anthropology, photographs communicate on many levels simultaneously, and maritime photographs in particular speak to us about technical, emotional, and physical challenges encountered on the sea. Maritime photography includes images of not only ships on the ocean, but also of the effects of seaborne communication between disparate parts of the world. The maritime environment has inspired a very special type of photography, one that strives to capture those moments, whether sublime, thrilling, or threatening, that define humanity's innate attraction for the ocean world.

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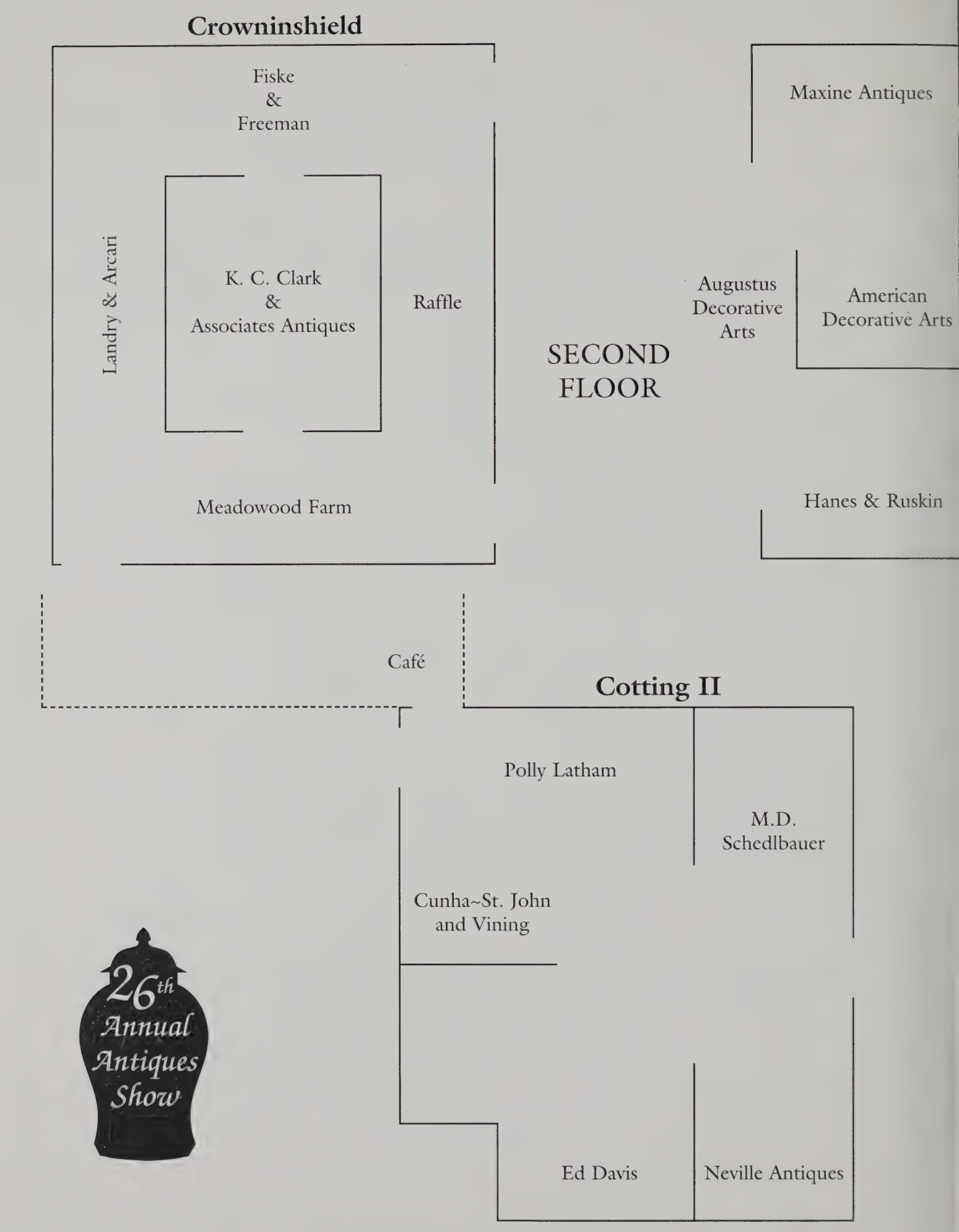
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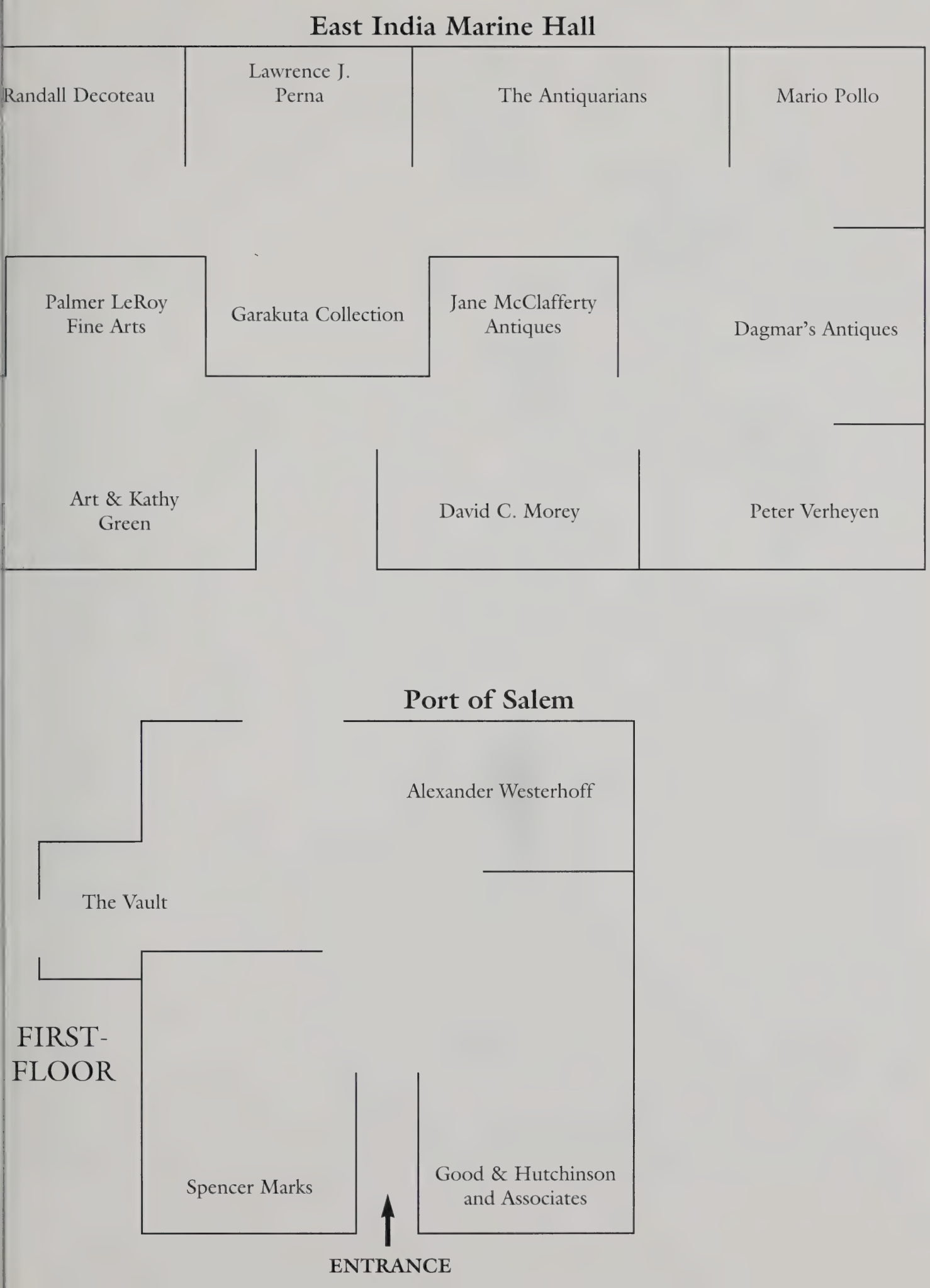
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# Collecting Federal Furniture

*By Stephen Fletcher*

I began collecting Federal era furniture in 1981, partly out of necessity, having bought an 1814 Federal house, a long standing dream. It had been built by a man engaged to a daughter of Elias Hasket Derby, a wealthy merchant and ship owner from Salem. The house was built in the Salem style, with elaborate interior detailing. A daughter of Elias Hasket Derby, after all, had grown up in sumptuous surroundings, so the house she was to occupy needed to be equally refined. The story ends abruptly, though. Something happened and she never moved into the house. At the time I purchased the house, I was a semi-serious collector of Mission furniture and Arts and Crafts, but I sold almost all that I'd collected in the previous 18 years to make the down payment. As a result, I found myself rattling around in a large, empty house. Ahead of me lay the daunting but tantalizing project of furnishing my home appropriately, with a limited budget.

Federal furniture, with its pilasters, fluted columns, capitals and plinths echoes the full-scale architectural motifs of my new home. It was people like the Derbys, newly prosperous, who helped create what we now call the Federal style. With their money, they built large elegant homes and they commissioned the finest cabinetmakers to furnish these homes with equally elegant furniture.



**Pair of Federal Painted and Decorated Oval-back Side Chairs**, probably Salem, Massachusetts, c. 1796, made for Elias Hasket Derby, the great Salem merchant and ship owner. These chairs are part of the original white set with a firm line of descent from Elias Hasket Derby, who succeeded to his father Richard's business of trade with the West Indies. Sold at Skinner March 23, 1997 for $178,500.



**Federal Mahogany Carved and Mahogany Veneer Card Table**, North Shore, Massachusetts, c. 1820. Sold at Skinner October 25, 1998 for $1,265.

What was produced in these shops reflects the political, social, and economic conditions of a young country just beginning to take itself seriously and ready to make itself known internationally. The furniture is less heavy than the colonial style that preceded it; there is a different sense of proportion characterized by the use of veneers, inlays, and subtle carving. Even collecting on a budget, I've found many opportunities to acquire this furniture and harmonious objects of fine quality: forms such as card tables, a sideboard, and chairs made in the first quarter of the 19th century, most of the pieces with ring turned and reeded legs. They are certainly not museum- or world-class quality, but in the context of my house, the sum total is more than I might have hoped for.

You may find yourself attracted to the stateliness of Federal furniture, as I did. You may not have just purchased a Federal home, but you're still interested in collecting. What do you do? A good place to begin these days is on your computer. If you search the World Wide Web for American Federal furniture, you'll pull up over 3 million hits. Or you might go to an auction house site. There you'll find information for the neophyte collector as well as the seasoned buyer and seller of antiques. There is also a wealth of resource material to be found in libraries.

Auction house catalogs are a valuable source of information. They provide pictures, descriptions, histories, and price ranges. Many auction houses also will supply a condition report on each piece: what's original, what's been restored. Most antiques don't come down to us unscathed. If a table has been tortured by a belt sander or stripped to the bare wood, well, that's unfortunate, to say the least. Not much can be done to restore its original luster and value. But repairs to certain antique

furnishings, when done professionally, can improve the piece and often enhance the value. Repairs (those that add value and those that diminish it) should be noted in the catalog description.

There's a great deal of affordable Federal furniture available, particularly in New England.

The next step is to go to an auction house preview; look long and hard at the pieces, run your hands across the surfaces, smell the wood in enclosed spaces such as drawers and inside clock cases. (Don't laugh. Old wood has a characteristic smell that has yet to be duplicated in an aerosol can.) Ask a staff member about that circa 1810 Federal tiger maple chest of drawers you're drawn to. He or she should be able to tell you what repairs have been made; or, that except for the patina, the piece of furniture is just as it was the day it left the cabinetmaker's shop 180 years ago.

A reputable antique dealer will supply you with this same information. Many dealers sell American Federal furniture, among other things, and most are more than willing to discuss their offerings with great enthusiasm and passion for the material. After all, everyone benefits if the buyer is both educated and informed. When you buy an antique, also don't be afraid to ask for a document of authenticity. There's no reason not to ask for proof that what you think is good is as good as it looks.

There's a great deal of affordable Federal furniture available, particularly in New England. Massachusetts was home to many cabinetmakers of the period: Samuel McIntire in Salem, John and Thomas Seymour in Boston, among them. There were many other shops in New England creating quality Federal furniture between 1785 and 1820, and much of this furniture has survived to this day.

As a result, you can buy a late 18th or early 19th century Federal card table for as little as $1,500. Of course, you can go to the next level and purchase a table in much better condition for $10,000 to $20,000, or as much as $500,000! High quality Federal furniture is available for very reasonable prices. People come up to me and say, "But I've only got $2,500 to spend. What can I get that is



**Federal Mahogany Inlaid Breakfast Table**, attributed to William Whitehead, New York City, 1792-1800. The table descended in the family from Captain Francis E. West of Essex, Connecticut; Capt. West commanded the ship *Edwina* of New York. Sold at Skinner June 7, 1998 for $134,500.

good?" Plenty. There'll be many examples of good Federal card tables, sideboards, chairs, and bureaus in sales throughout New England. I know; I've seen them, and continue to see them. Some are in excellent condition, some have minor imperfections. Many of them are beautiful to live with and pleasing to the eye. They may be subtle masterpieces, handmade by artisans using fine wood, hand tools, their own talent and imagination.

When I am fortunate enough to acquire an object I love, I'm acquiring a piece of history, an artifact of our younger nation. I'm appreciative of the talent of the person who made the piece and I'm perhaps connecting myself with all the people over the years who've owned that object. Our attraction to the same piece of furniture suggests we have at least something in common: a vision of what is beautiful, and the desire to be surrounded by and living with it every day, enriching life at home.

*Stephen Fletcher is Executive Vice President at Skinner, and director of its department of American Furniture and Decorative Arts.*

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**Transitional Mahogany Inlaid Chest of Drawers**, probably Newburyport, Massachusetts, c. 1790. Descended in the family of Alice Manton Wonson, Gloucester, Massachusetts. Sold at Skinner October 25, 1998 for $17,250.

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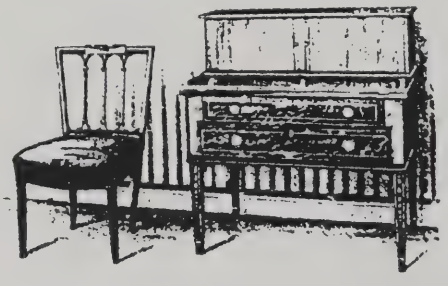
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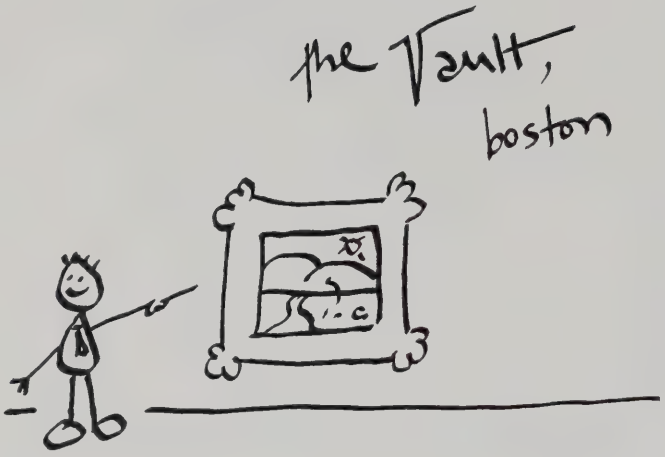
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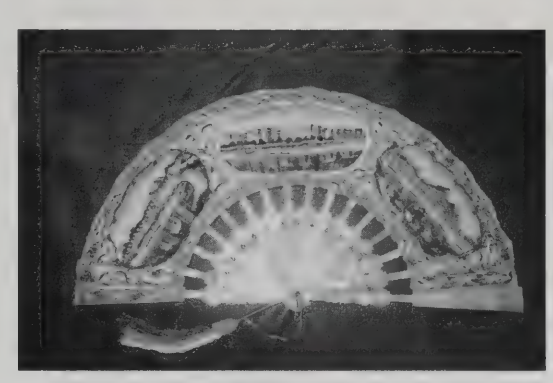
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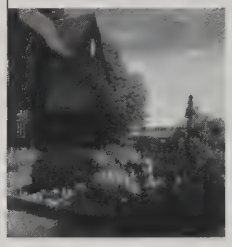
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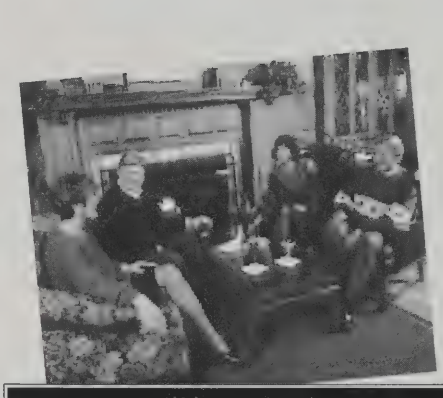
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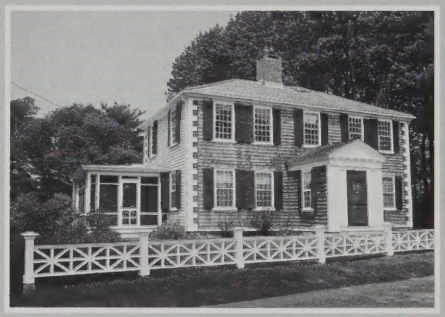


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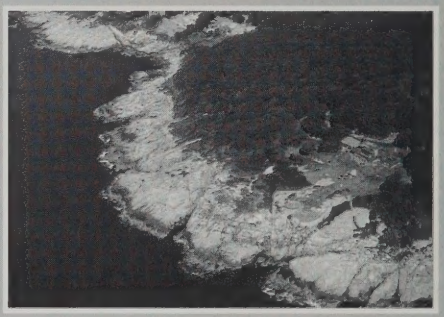


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